

# The brave new world of cyberdelics

## 'Interzone tele-visionaries throw an evolutionary techno-party

**T**O SOME, IT'S a glimpse of the new millennium, an expo for the dawning post-literate society where computer technology and cosmic consciousness converge to lift humankind out of its metaphysical quagmire.

To others, it's just a party. Saturday's "cyberdelic" extravaganza at the Loudon Nelson Center will feature those things you might expect to find at a big blow-out-the-jams frat party like a hot live band, food and dancing. But this is something altogether different. Instead of beer



Wallace Baine

kegs and wet T-shirt contests, you'll find high-tech gadgets, poetry readings, drum circles and "think drinks" tied together with an overarching vision of mind-expanding, interactive entertainment.

The event is being held by Interzone, a conglomeration of techno-nuts and intellectual tele-visionaries who are so close to the cutting edge their fingers are bleeding. To Joe Matheny, the Interzone's self-styled "evolutionary intelligence agent," Interzone is a revolution, an attempt to wrest control of the common means of communication away from narrow-minded monied interests.

"We live in a society of spectacle," said Matheny. "And the spectacle comes to us on the screen — whether it's the television screen, the movie screen or the computer screen. Those who control the screen, con-

trol the culture. We're trying to tell people 'Hey, would you rather give up control of your screen to someone else or control it yourself.' We're giving them that opportunity."

How exactly will they do that?

The Interzone event puts heavy stress on interactive technology — that is, technologies in which you participate (video games are a rudimentary form of interactive technologies). If you go to Saturday's event, you might get a shot at simulated virtual reality (a technology that gives you a chance to walk through an artificial, computer-invented environment), a midi ball (a beach ball that make tones every time you touch it) and computer systems that generate art.

Mixed together with these whiz-bang innovations is a bohemian, new-age ethic that these systems can be used to further the evolution of our benighted race (an idea Matheny calls "techno-shamanism."). So amidst the computer light shows, you'll have a neo-psychedelic lecture panel, poetry reading, trance dances, drumming and even a quiet zone (a room where you can go to enjoy more sedate entertainment).

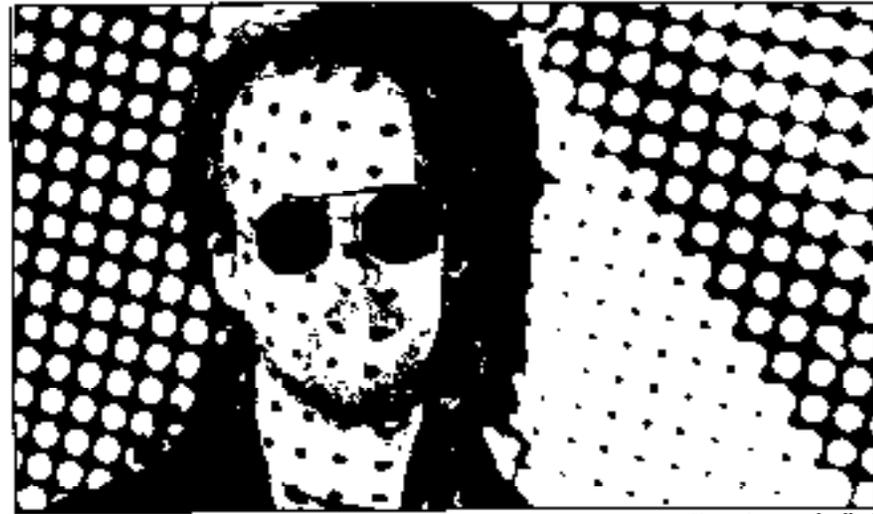
The headliner is media warrior Rob Brez-sny's band World Entertainment War.

Also included will be the hot new trend "smart drinks," a juice mixture of amino acids and other compounds professed to boost mental awareness and physical well-being. Though food and drink will be free with the price of a ticket, the smart drinks will be priced such that not-so-smart people cannot overindulge in search of a buzz.

The name of the venture came from the fertile minds of underground writer William Burroughs and artist Brion Gysin ("Gysin never gets credit," said Matheny.) Those who have seen the recent film adaptation of Burroughs' "Naked Lunch" will recognize the reference to Interzone, the fictional place (based on the very real place of Tangiers) where familiar laws of social intercourse don't apply.

Matheny and his Interzone colleagues would like to take the concept beyond one weekend party. Their plans include doing a series of progressively larger events to the point where they can become an established business.

"We'd like to find a place to showcase



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### Preview

- w **WtiAT: Interzone**
- **WHERE: Loudon Nelson Center, 301 Center St., Santa Cruz**
- **WHEN: Saturday, noon-11 p.m**
- **TICKETS: Day, \$10; Night, \$10; All event, \$15**

cutting-edge entertainment and art and also be an educational facility," said Matheny. "We want it to be a community focus where people can come to talk about ideas."

One of those new ideas is to create "a new model for business." Matheny wants to chum the business's money back into the community in form of financial sponsorship of local arts and education.

"The whole thing is kind of defining itself as we go along," said Interzone agent Ratnakara. "We want to create a place not where you go to be fed entertainment, but something interactive. We're trying to get away from passive entertainment."

What separates the new breed of bohemians from the beats, the hippies and the punks of the past is a benign faith in technology. What separates them from computer-industry dweebs and hacks is a sense of social idealism, a distaste for corporate political systems and a willingness to engage in a good fight for the soul of the culture.

"The same thing that is used to enslave you can also be used to liberate you," asserted Matheny. "Is it beneficial to be a Luddite and ignore or condemn technology even though those who want to control your life are using it all the time? Or is it smarter to master those same technologies yourself? Technology is completely neutral. It's all in the application." The Saturday event will more than just a computer playground to the folks at Interzone. They believe that artistic expressions need not be restrained by cultural context. So they provide Native American ceremonies next to jazz improv next to computer animation. They dream of things like space exploration, time travel and drugs to enhance the mind. They feel that the world's spiritual and artistic traditions are fusing together in their generation. "I hope this becomes the mainstream," said Ratnakara. "If your astronomically minded, you can say we're on a cusp of two ages."

"There is a sudden need for honesty in this culture now," added Matheny. "People are tired of getting manipulated and cheated. Everybody wants to be master of their own destiny again. The old monolithic structures are crumbling and something's got to be there in their place."

Sure, it's a party. But there'll be a lot of people there convinced they are pouring gas into the engine of cultural evolution.

Wallace Baine is a Sentinel staff writer.